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United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In its resolution 65/99, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it, after consulting with the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

The present report refers to correspondence between the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations regarding actions taken by the Government of Israel in implementing the relevant provisions of the resolution. It also presents the information made available by the Commissioner-General of UNRWA to the Secretary-General on the return of refugees registered with the Agency to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.

* A/66/150.

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1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly pursuant to paragraph 5 of its resolution 65/99, entitled "Persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities", the operative part of which reads:

> *The General Assembly*,
>
> 1. *Reaffirms* the right of all persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities to return to their homes or former places of residence in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967;
>
> 2. *Stresses* the necessity for an accelerated return of displaced persons, and calls for compliance with the mechanism agreed upon by the parties in article XII of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements of 13 September 1993 on the return of displaced persons;
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> 3. *Endorses*, in the meanwhile, the efforts of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to continue to provide humanitarian assistance, as far as practicable, on an emergency basis, and as a temporary measure, to persons in the area who are currently displaced and in serious need of continued assistance as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities;
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> 4. *Strongly appeals* to all Governments and to organizations and individuals to contribute generously to the Agency and to the other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned for the above-mentioned purposes;
>
> 5. *Requests* the Secretary-General, after consulting with the Commissioner-General, to report to the General Assembly before its sixty-sixth session on the progress made with regard to the implementation of the present resolution.

2. On 9 and 11 May 2011, the Secretary-General addressed notes verbales to the Permanent Representatives of Member States, including the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, in which he drew attention to his reporting responsibility under the resolution and requested the Permanent Representative to inform him of any action his or her Government had taken or envisaged taking in implementation of the relevant provisions of the resolution.

3. In a note verbale dated 8 July 2011, the Permanent Representative of Israel replied as follows:

> The Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to refer to the latter's note, dated 9 May 2011, concerning resolutions 65/98 to 65/101 adopted by the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session under the agenda item "United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East".
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> While Israel voted against these resolutions in light of their politicization and one-sided perspective, as it has done on similar resolutions in the past, the Permanent Mission wishes to reiterate Israel's support for UNRWA's humanitarian activities. In this respect, Israel reaffirms its intention to continue facilitating UNRWA's extension of humanitarian services to its beneficiaries in the field.

Despite an ongoing and acute threat to its security, Israel has gone to great lengths fostering conditions for Palestinian economic development and cooperation, including liberalization of the system by which civilian goods enter Gaza and assisting in extending humanitarian assistance to Palestinian beneficiaries.

Since the beginning of 2010, Israel has approved the building of 72 UNRWA projects in Gaza. However, UNRWA, for reasons of its own, has commenced work on only 33 of those projects (of those 10 have been completed). In education, for example, Israel has approved the building of 24 new schools in Gaza (not including an additional 18 new education projects approved in June 2011). However, UNRWA has started work on 11 schools only. It should also be noted that, despite the delay in execution of approved projects on UNRWA's side, in the years 2008 to 2010 UNRWA has built 35 new schools in Gaza — an increase of 40 per cent compared to the number of schools built in 2000-2007.

Over the last year the Government of Israel has also authorized major steps to ease security-related restrictions in the West Bank. In 2010, 98 roadblocks were removed throughout Judea and Samaria and there is a free flow of movement between all major Palestinian cities in Judea and Samaria — from Jenin in the north to Hebron in the south. GDP growth in the West Bank for 2010 is at 8 per cent and tourists' visits increased 49 per cent, mainly to Bethlehem.

The positive trend is maintained in the first quarter of 2011: GDP grew by 3.4 per cent compared with the first quarter of 2010.

Despite attacks by Hamas, Israel continues to facilitate the entry of large quantities of humanitarian supplies and other products into Gaza. In 2010 there was a 28 per cent increase in the number of truckloads that were transferred into Gaza (39,868 in 2010 compared to 31,055 in 2009) and the daily average of truckloads transferred into Gaza amounted to 163, a 43 per cent increase compared to 2009. Export from the Gaza Strip was also expanded — 152 tons of strawberries and 368,208 flowers have been exported in 2010. In 2010, 17,924 patients and accompanying individuals were permitted to exit the Gaza Strip for medical care, a 70 per cent increase compared to 2009. Throughout the year Israel maintains the supply of electricity to the Gaza Strip. The transfer of diesel for the Gaza power station was carried out according to requests from the Palestinian Authority — 70,876,781 litres of diesel were transferred.

These changes resulted in an increase of 15 per cent in Gaza GDP in 2010. This positive trend is continuing in the first quarter of 2011 — which shows a 24.4 per cent growth in GDP and 20 per cent growth in GDP per capita compared to the first quarter of 2010.

Notwithstanding the above, terrorist organizations in the West Bank and Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip remain active in planning, preparing and attempting to execute terrorist attacks.

In 2010, 463 terrorist attacks emanated from or were carried out in the West Bank, leading to nine deaths of Israeli citizens. These attacks were carried out in all forms and on all fronts, particularly by Hamas.

The first half of 2011 witnessed an alarming escalation in the nature of terrorist activity against Israeli targets in the West Bank and Jerusalem. In the first five months of 2011, 278 terrorist attacks were carried out in or emanated from the West Bank, resulting in the death of 11 Israeli citizens including, in March 2011, the brutal murder of the Fogel family, in which five family members (father, mother and three children — 11 years old, 4 years old and a baby of 3 months) were murdered in their sleep by two terrorists who penetrated their home.

In 2010, 372 terrorist attacks emanated from the Gaza Strip. In the first four months of 2011 we witnessed an alarming increase in the number of terror attacks emanating from the Gaza Strip, which currently stands at 163. Another alarming escalation is the nature of the attacks, which involve, in addition to Grad missiles, rockets and mortar shells, anti-tank missiles aimed at Israeli civilian populations. One example is the attack that was carried out on 7 April 2011 when an anti-tank missile, fired from Gaza at a school bus, killed one Israeli teenager.

Notwithstanding its support for UNRWA's humanitarian activities, Israel remains concerned by the political motivation of the aforesaid resolutions, and is disturbed by the fact that they present a one-sided view which fails to reflect the reality on the ground. In this respect, public statements by UNRWA officials carrying a strong political and one-sided tone are deeply troubling. As a professional, humanitarian body, UNRWA must be vigilant in avoiding references to matters of a political nature.

Israel supports a consolidation of UNRWA resolutions, and a removal of all extraneous political language. Moreover, Israel urges the Secretary-General and UNRWA to consider, together with the concerned parties, ways in which the United Nations can enhance the manner in which it advances the welfare of the Palestinian people.

In this respect, Israel favours an application in the Palestinian context of the standard principles guiding the United Nations with respect to treatment of refugees. Specifically, UNRWA's mandate should be such that entitlement to its services will be defined in a manner consistent with the standard United Nations policy on refugees. Furthermore, UNRWA's mandate should include the active promotion in the Palestinian context of the broadly applied United Nations goals of resettlement and local integration of refugees.

The annual General Assembly resolutions on UNRWA represent a politically motivated departure from the standard United Nations policy on refugee matters. This politicization of a strictly humanitarian issue has exacerbated the situation of the Palestinian refugees by preventing practical solutions to their needs, such as have been successfully implemented with respect to numerous groups of refugees around the world. Israel attaches importance to promoting such changes in these resolutions as will ensure that the mandate of UNRWA is consistent with the general principles guiding United Nations policy on refugees.

4. In connection with paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 65/99, the Secretary-General has obtained from the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

(UNRWA) the information available to him on the return of refugees registered with the Agency. As indicated in previous reports on the subject, the Agency is not involved in any arrangements for the return of refugees, nor is it involved in any arrangements for the return of displaced persons who are not registered as refugees. Its information is based on requests by returning registered refugees for transfer of their UNRWA registration records from Jordan, Lebanon or the Syrian Arab Republic to the areas to which they have returned. The Agency would not necessarily be aware of the return of any registered refugees who did not request the transfer of their registration records. So far as is known to the Agency, from 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011, 207 refugees registered with UNRWA returned to the West Bank and 158 to the Gaza Strip from places outside the occupied Palestinian territory. It should be noted that some of these may not have been displaced in 1967 but may have been displaced in earlier or later years or may be members of the family of a displaced registered refugee. Thus, taking into account the estimate given in paragraph 4 of the previous report (A/65/283), the number of displaced registered refugees who are known by the Agency to have returned to the occupied territories since June 1967 is about 33,639. The Agency is unable to estimate the total number of displaced inhabitants who have returned. It keeps records only of registered refugees and, as noted above, even those records, particularly with respect to the location of registered refugees, may be incomplete.

5. In connection with paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 65/99, the Secretary-General refers to the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2010 (A/66/13) and to the previous reports of the Commissioner-General for accounts of the continuous and ongoing assistance provided by UNRWA to persons displaced and in need of continued assistance.